CLAIMS

1.   A data lookup method for enabling a user to access a data set, comprising the steps:

(a) accessing a sorted list comprising the data set;

(b) dividing the list into a plurality of sub-lists, and displaying information to the user, the information indicating the range of data in each of the sub-lists;

(c) enabling the user to select one of the sub-lists;

(d) if the number of entries in the selected sub-list is larger than a predetermined threshold, going back to step (b) above with the selected sub-list in place of the list, but otherwise displaying the selected sub-list to the user and enabling the user to select a data item from that sub-list; and

(e) returning the selected data item to the user.

2. A method according to claim 1 wherein the data set is stored in a computer service, and the user accesses the data service remotely by way of a portable wireless device.

3. A method according to claim 2 wherein the portable wireless device comprises a WAP (Wireless Application Protocol) phone.

4. A method according to claim 2 wherein the portable wireless devices comprises a PDA (Personal Digital Assistant).

5. A method according to claim 2 wherein the threshold is equal to the number of lines of text that can be displayed on the portable wireless device.

6. A method according to claim 1 wherein the step of dividing the list into a plurality of sub-lists comprises dividing the list into two sub-lists.

7. A method according to claim 1 wherein the step of dividing the list into a plurality of sub-lists comprises dividing the list into four sub-lists.

8. A method according to claim 1 wherein each entry in the list includes a key value, and wherein the information indicating the range of data in each of the sub-lists comprises the key value of the first entry in each of the sub-lists.

9. A data lookup system comprising a database holding a data set, a plurality of user devices, and processing means for performing the following steps:

(a) accessing a sorted list comprising the data set;

(b) dividing the list into a plurality of sub-lists, and returning information to the user device, the information indicating the range of data in each of the sub-lists;

(c) receiving a message from the user device indicating that the user has selected one of the sub-lists;

(d) if the number of entries in the selected sub-list is larger than a predetermined threshold, going back to step (b) above with the selected sub-list in place of the list, but otherwise returning the selected sub-list to the user device;

(e) in response to a message from the user device indicating selection of a data item from the sub-list, returning the selected data item to the user.

10. A system according to claim 9 wherein the user devices are remote from the database and processing means and communicate with the processing means by way of a network.

11. A system according to claim 10 wherein the devices are portable wireless devices.

12. A system according to claim 11 wherein the portable wireless devices include at least one WAP (Wireless Application Protocol) phone.

13. A system according to claim 11 wherein the portable wireless devices include at least one PDA (Personal Digital Assistant)

14. A system according to claim 11 wherein the threshold is equal to the number of lines of text that can be displayed on the portable wireless device.